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**Activation studies with amines and amino acids of the  $\alpha$ -carbonic anhydrase from the pathogenic protozoan *Trypanosoma cruzi***

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**Abstract.** The activation of a  $\alpha$ -class carbonic anhydrase (CAs, EC 4.2.1.1) from *Trypanosoma cruzi* (TcCA) was investigated

**Keywords:** carbonic anhydrase; metalloenzymes, pathogens; activators; *Trypanosoma cruzi*

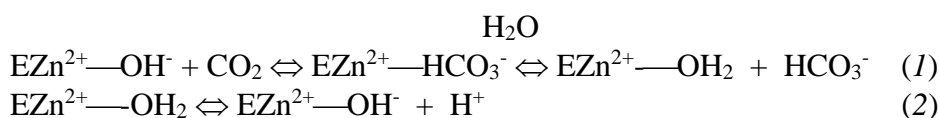
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## 1. Introduction

Protozoan carbonic anhydrases (CAs, EC 4.2.1.1) such as those from *Trypanosoma cruzi*,<sup>1-3</sup> *Leishmania donovani chagasi*,<sup>1,4,5</sup> and *Plasmodium falciparum*,<sup>4,6</sup> started to be investigated in recent years as potential drug targets for finding agents enzymes that interfere with the growth and proliferation of the parasites which provoke widespread diseases all over the world.<sup>2-11</sup> *T. cruzi* encodes for an  $\alpha$ -class<sup>7,8</sup> CA (TcCA), which has recently been cloned, characterized and investigated for its inhibition, being shown to be a promising new target in the fight against Chagas disease, provoked after infection with this protozoan species.<sup>1-3</sup> Indeed, both sulfonamide, thiol or hydroxamate CA inhibitors (CAIs)<sup>7-9</sup> were shown to effectively inhibit *in vitro* this enzyme, and in some cases, also to interfere with the growth of some forms of the parasite *in vivo*, which may lead to the discovery of potential drugs devoid of the drug resistance problems encountered by the few clinically used compounds available so far for the treatment of Chagas disease.<sup>1-3</sup>

However, in contrast to the CAIs, which were extensively investigated for their interaction with various protozoan CAs. Such as those from the malaria parasite, *Leishmania* spp., and *T. cruzi*,<sup>1</sup> the CA activators (CAAs)<sup>10-12</sup> have been much less investigated at the present time. For the mammalian CA isoforms, also belonging to the  $\alpha$ -CA genetic family,<sup>13-16</sup> similar to TcCA, it has been shown that such compounds participate to the CA catalytic cycle, which is shown schematically in Equations 1 and 2 (where 'E' denotes enzyme):



The first step (Equation 1) involves a nucleophilic attack of a zinc-bound hydroxide species of the enzyme on the CO<sub>2</sub> substrate, that is bound in a hydrophobic pocket nearby. in an optimal orientation for the hydration reaction to bicarbonate.<sup>11,16</sup> Bicarbonate formed in the hydration reaction is then replaced by an incoming water molecule to generate the catalytically acidic form of the enzyme, EZn<sup>2+</sup>—OH<sub>2</sub> (Equation 1), whereas bicarbonate is released into the solution. For the regeneration of the zinc hydroxide species, a proton transfer reaction occurs from the Zn(II)-bound water molecule to the external reaction medium (Equation 2), which is the rate-determining step of the entire catalytic cycle.<sup>10</sup>



enzyme - activator complexes

In the presence of activators (A in Equation 3), formation of enzyme-activator complexes occurs, in which the proton transfer step becomes intramolecular and thus, more efficient than the

corresponding intermolecular process shown schematically in Eq. 2.<sup>10,16</sup> The CA activation mechanism was demonstrated by extensive kinetic and X-ray crystallographic studies on the human isoforms hCA I and II.<sup>10-16</sup> Based on such studies it has been shown that the activator was bound at the entrance to the active site cavity, region from which it can interfere with the proton transfer reactions between the active site and the reaction medium. In fact, most of the activators studies so far belong to the amino and/or amino acid derivatives, and possess moieties with an appropriate  $pK_a$  (generally in the range of 6-8) for an efficient proton shuttling processes between the active site and the environment.<sup>10-17</sup>

CAAs were only recently shown to possess the potential of acting as pharmacological agents for the therapy of memory disorder and cognition impairment.<sup>16</sup> However, unlike CAIs, which are clinically used as diuretics,<sup>18</sup> antiglaucoma drugs,<sup>19</sup> antiobesity,<sup>20</sup> antitumor,<sup>21</sup> anti-neuropathic pain,<sup>22</sup> or anti-arthritis agents,<sup>23</sup> there are no clinically approved CAAs. The natural and non-natural amino acids and amines of type **1-24** are among the most investigated CAAs, and they were also evaluated in the present study for their interaction with the protozoan enzyme TcCA (Fig. 1).

## 2. Experimental

**2.1. Chemistry.** Amino acids and amines **1-24** were commercially available, highest purity reagents from Sigma-Aldrich, Milan, Italy. TcCA was a recombinant protein produced as reported earlier by our group.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.2. CA enzyme activation assay

An Sx.18Mv-R Applied Photophysics (Oxford, UK) stopped-flow instrument has been used to assay the catalytic activity of various CA isozymes for CO<sub>2</sub> hydration reaction.<sup>17</sup> Phenol red (at a concentration of 0.2 mM) was used as indicator, working at the absorbance maximum of 557 nm, with 10 mM Hepes (pH 7.5) as buffer, 0.1 M Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> (for maintaining constant ionic strength), following the CA-catalyzed CO<sub>2</sub> hydration reaction for a period of 10 s at 25 °C. The CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations ranged from 1.7 to 17 mM for the determination of the kinetic parameters and activation constants. For each activator at least six traces of the initial 5-10% of the reaction have been used for determining the initial velocity. The uncatalyzed rates were determined in the same manner and subtracted from the total observed rates. Stock solutions of activators (10 mM) were prepared in distilled-deionized water and dilutions up to 1 nM were done thereafter with the assay buffer. Activator and enzyme solutions were pre-incubated together for 15 min (standard assay at room temperature) prior to assay, in order to allow for the formation of the E-A complex. The

activation constant ( $K_A$ ), defined similarly with the inhibition constant  $K_I$ , can be obtained by considering the classical Michaelis–Menten equation (equation 4), which has been fitted by non-linear least squares by using PRISM 3:

$$v = v_{\max} / \{ 1 + (K_M/[S])(1 + [A]_f/K_A) \} \quad (4)$$

where  $[A]_f$  is the free concentration of activator.

Working at substrate concentrations considerably lower than  $K_M$  ( $[S] \ll K_M$ ), and considering that  $[A]_f$  can be represented in the form of the total concentration of the enzyme ( $[E]_t$ ) and activator ( $[A]_t$ ), the obtained competitive steady-state equation for determining the activation constant is given by equation 5:

$$v = v_0 \cdot K_A / \{ K_A + ([A]_t - 0.5 \{ ([A]_t + [E]_t + K_A) - ([A]_t + [E]_t + K_A)^2 - 4[A]_t \cdot [E]_t \}^{1/2}) \} \quad (5)$$

where  $v_0$  represents the initial velocity of the enzyme-catalyzed reaction in the absence of activator.<sup>10,24,25</sup>

### 3. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Activation of human carbonic anhydrase (hCA) isozymes I, II, and TcCA with L-Trp, at 25°C, for the CO<sub>2</sub> hydration reaction.<sup>17</sup>

Isozyme	$k_{\text{cat}}^*$ (s <sup>-1</sup> )	$K_M^*$ (mM)	$(k_{\text{cat}})_{\text{L-Trp}}^{**}$ (s <sup>-1</sup> )	$K_A^{***}$ (μM) L-Trp
hCA I <sup>a</sup>	2.0x10 <sup>5</sup>	4.0	3.4x10 <sup>5</sup>	44.0
hCA II <sup>a</sup>	1.4x10 <sup>6</sup>	9.3	4.9x10 <sup>6</sup>	27.0
TcCA <sup>b</sup>	1.2x10 <sup>6</sup>	8.1	7.8x10 <sup>6</sup>	2.54

\* Observed catalytic rate without activator.  $K_M$  values in the presence and the absence of activators were the same for the various CAs (data not shown).

\*\* Observed catalytic rate in the presence of 10 μM activator.

\*\*\* The activation constant ( $K_A$ ) for each enzyme was obtained by fitting the observed catalytic enhancements as a function of the activator concentration.<sup>13</sup> Mean from at least three determinations by a stopped-flow, CO<sub>2</sub> hydrase method.<sup>30</sup> Standard errors were in the range of 5-10 % of the reported values (data not shown).

<sup>a</sup>Human recombinant isozymes, from ref.<sup>13</sup>; <sup>b</sup>Protozoan recombinant enzyme, this work.

The structure-activity relationship (SAR) for the activation of TcCA with compounds **1-24**, can be delineated considering the data shown in Table 2, where the activation data of the human isoforms hCA I and II are also presented for comparison.

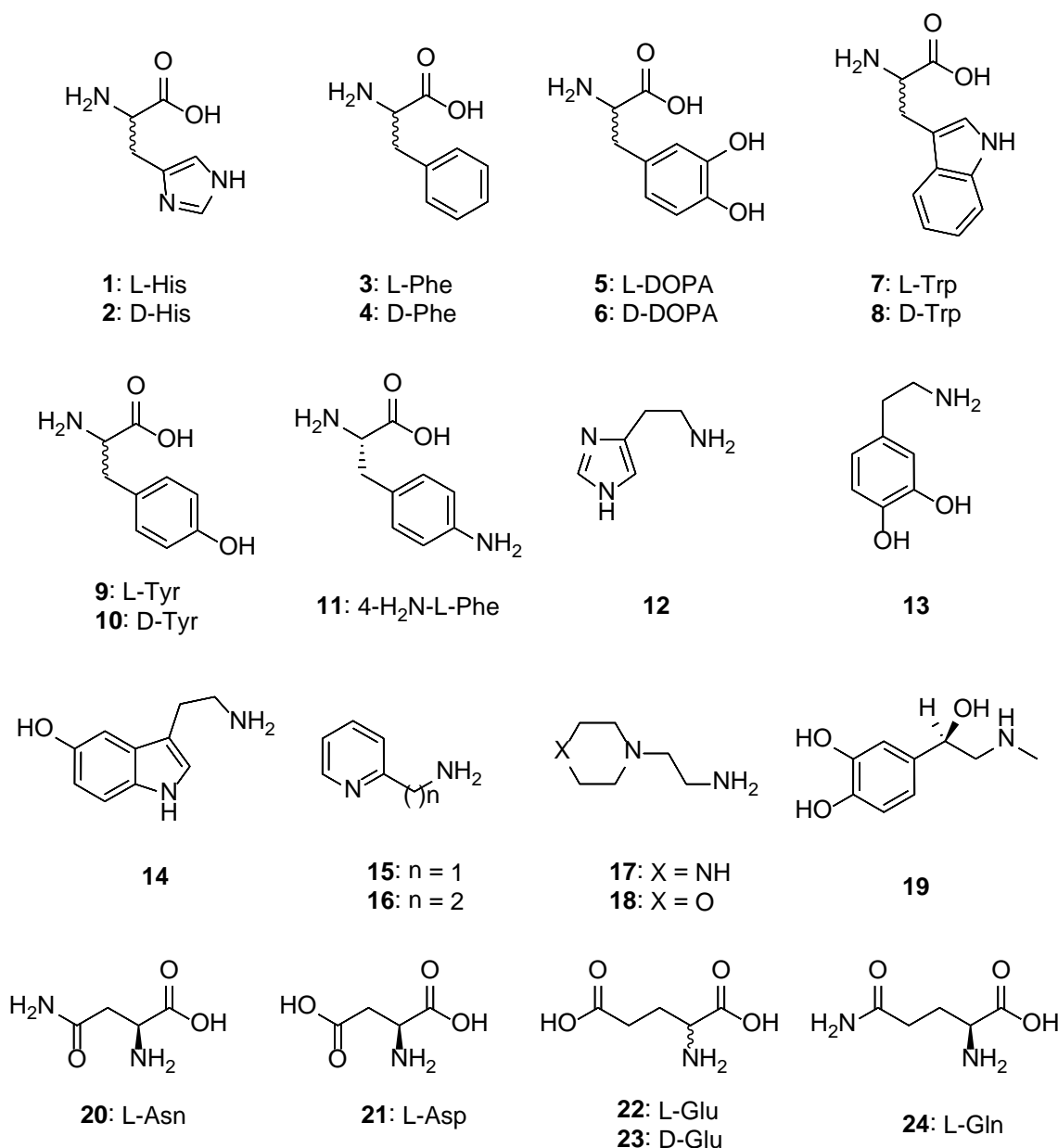


Fig. 1: Amino acids **1-24** investigated as TcCA activators.

Table 2: Activation constants of hCA I, hCA II and the protozoan enzyme TcCA with amino acids and amines **1 – 24**. Data for hCA I and II are from ref.<sup>16</sup>

No.	Compound	K <sub>A</sub> (μM)*
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		hCA I <sup>a</sup>	hCA II <sup>a</sup>	LdcCA <sup>b</sup>	TcCA <sup>c</sup>
<b>1</b>	L-His	0.03	10.9	8.21	11.3
<b>2</b>	D-His	0.09	43	4.13	7.54
<b>3</b>	L-Phe	0.07	0.013	9.16	12.1
<b>4</b>	D-Phe	86	0.035	3.95	6.39
<b>5</b>	L-DOPA	3.1	11.4	1.64	0.83
<b>6</b>	D-DOPA	4.9	7.8	5.47	0.38
<b>7</b>	L-Trp	44	27	4.02	2.54
<b>8</b>	D-Trp	41	12	6.18	1.79
<b>9</b>	L-Tyr	0.02	0.011	8.05	4.92
<b>10</b>	D-Tyr	0.04	0.013	1.27	2.80
<b>11</b>	4-H <sub>2</sub> N-L-Phe	0.24	0.15	15.9	0.75
<b>12</b>	Histamine	2.1	125	0.74	2.73
<b>13</b>	Dopamine	13.5	9.2	0.81	>100
<b>14</b>	Serotonin	45	50	0.62	1.98
<b>15</b>	2-Pyridyl-methylamine	26	34	0.23	>100
<b>16</b>	2-(2-Aminoethyl)pyridine	13	15	0.012	>100
<b>17</b>	1-(2-Aminoethyl)-piperazine	7.4	2.3	0.009	>100
<b>18</b>	4-(2-Aminoethyl)-morpholine	0.14	0.19	0.94	6.95
<b>19</b>	L-Adrenaline	0.09	96	4.89	>100
<b>20</b>	L-Asn	11.3	>100	4.76	>100
<b>21</b>	L-Asp	5.20	>100	0.30	18.7
<b>22</b>	L-Glu	6.43	>100	12.9	>100
<b>23</b>	D-Glu	10.7	>100	0.082	>100
<b>24</b>	L-Gln	>100	>50	2.51	2.85

\* Mean from three determinations by a stopped-flow, CO<sub>2</sub> hydrase method.<sup>17</sup> Standard errors were in the range of 5-10 % of the reported values (data not shown).

<sup>a</sup> Human recombinant isozymes, stopped flow CO<sub>2</sub> hydrase assay method,<sup>16b</sup>

<sup>b</sup> Protozoan recombinant enzyme, from ref. <sup>25b</sup>

<sup>c</sup>This work.

and of 13-15  $\mu\text{M}$  for the human CAs. Thus, this compound may be used as a pharmacologic tool to explore the role that LdcCA might play in the life cycle of this protozoan and whether CA activation is important for the infection or host colonization by *Leishmania*, in diverse phases of the pathogen's life cycle.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The first activation study of a protozoan

Because activators have not been identified for protozoan CAs, this study should be important for understanding the role that this enzyme has in the life cycle of *Leishmania*, particularly considering the fact that many of the activators identified are autacoids present in rather high concentrations in different tissues of the host mammals that are infected by these parasites.

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